

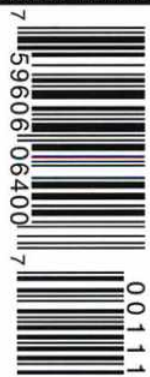
MARVEL
SECRET
INVASION
WHO
DO YOU
TRUST
?
04.2008

SECRET INVASION

SAGA



DIRECT EDITION



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SECRET INVASION

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Iron Man Armor Systems Log.

Contact: Maria Hill, Deputy
Director of SHIELD.

Contact made.

Communication
link established.

GOOD MORNING,
MARIA. HOW'S THAT
ASSIGNMENT COMING?

OH, IT'S A *WONDERFUL* ASSIGNMENT. IT'S
REALLY BRINGING OUT THE *PLEASANT* AND *ENTHUSIASTIC*
BUREAUCRAT IN ME. I'VE HAD TO DIVERT MY *BEST* DATA-MINING
TECHS OFF THEIR CURRENT WORKLOAD TO RUN DOWN THIS ARCAINE DATA
FOR YOU, THEN FEED OUR RESULTS THROUGH SOME NEW-FANGLED *A.I.*
AGGREGATOR YOU DREAMED UP BECAUSE *YOU* DON'T TRUST *ME* TO
FORMULATE THE SUMMARY FOR YOU.

AND THANKS FOR THE
36 HOURS TO DO
ALL THIS.

THIS IS WHAT
SHIELD AGENTS
DO, MARIA.

I KNOW
THEY'RE NOT ALWAYS GRACED
WITH INSIGHT INTO WHY THEY'RE DOING
IT, BUT I'M YOUR DEPUTY DIRECTOR!
WHERE'S THE TRUST?

I'M SORRY I CAN'T CUT
YOU IN ON THIS. IT'S
NOT BY CHOICE--BELIEVE
ME. BUT SOMETHING
VERY...*INTERESTING*...IS
GOING ON AND--

I'VE LEARNED
THAT "INTERESTING" IN THIS
LINE OF WORK TRANSLATES DIRECTLY
INTO "POTENTIALLY WORLD-SHATTERING."
CAN I *SLEEP EASY* TONIGHT,
MR. NOT-FORTHCOMING?

DO YOU
EVER?

(SIGH.)

POINT TAKEN. OK, WHATEVER YOU NEED
TO REVIEW, WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED, AT LEAST
AS PER THE GUIDELINES YOU GAVE US. SOME OF THIS
STUFF WAS PEELED FROM *PAPER FILES* THAT HAD BEEN
TURNING BROWN AFTER *FIFTY YEARS*. I'M UPLOADING
THE WHOLE AGGREGATED DATA MINE, CULLED FROM
S.H.I.E.L.D., FBI, CIA, NSA AND EVERY FOREIGN INTEL
AGENCY WE COULD PULL FROM WITHOUT *LEAVING A*
FOOTPRINT. WE ALSO PATCHED INTO S.W.O.R.D.
LIKE YOU REQUESTED.

SO HERE
YOU GO: I HAVE *NO IDEA*
WHAT'S IN THIS REPORT, IT'S BEEN
THOROUGHLY ENCRYPTED THROUGH THE
WHOLE PROCESS, AND IT'S *UP TO YOU*
TO INTERPRET THE ANALYSIS.
BUT YOU KNOW THAT.

NOW, I'VE
GOT *OTHER WORK* TO
DO. DEPUTY DIRECTOR
SIGNING OFF.

Iron Man Armor Systems Log.



"WELL, THAT WAS SHORT AND SURLY. BUT I CAN **UNDERSTAND** MARIA'S FRUSTRATION. I DON'T **WANT** TO TAKE THIS ON FEELING AS **ISOLATED** AND ALONE AS I DO. I'LL NEED HELP TO **MANAGE** THIS FIGHT BEFORE THE DAY IS DONE. I KNOW THAT. BUT UNTIL THEN--UNTIL I CAN BE **SURE** I KNOW WHO AND WHAT I'M DEALING WITH, WHO I CAN **TRUST**-- THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO FIGHT A **SKRULL INVASION**.

"(DEAR GOD.
SKRULLS. JUST
WHAT WE NEED.)

"BEFORE I BRUSH UP ON MY **SKRULL HISTORY**, LET ME GET MY BEARINGS ON WHERE WE ARE **RIGHT NOW** AND HOW WE GOT HERE. REVIEWING PAST ENGAGEMENTS WITH THEM WILL BE HELPFUL TO TRY AND DIVINE THEIR **MOTIVES AND METHODS**, BUT THE LAST COUPLE DAYS HAVE BEEN SUCH AN ADRENALINE RUSH. I NEED TO MAKE SURE I DON'T MISS ANY NUANCE...

"SO...**LAST NIGHT**. THE MOMENT IT DAWNED ON ME THAT A **SKRULL INFILTRATION** HAD BEGUN.

"SPIDER-WOMAN BROUGHT ME A LITTLE **GIFT** IN MY SLEEP. A **SKRULL**, **STONE DEAD** AND WRAPPED IN A BLACK PLASTIC BODY BAG. BUT NOT JUST ANY **SKRULL**. ONE POSING AS **ELEKTRA**.

"SO **HOW** DID THIS BODY MAKE ITS WAY TO MY BEDSIDE? ACCORDING TO JESSICA, SHE AND LUKE CAGE'S BAND OF REBEL AVENGERS HAD TRAVELED TO **JAPAN** TO RESCUE MAYA LOPEZ, CODENAMED **ECHO**. MAYA'S ONE HELL OF A **BRAVE SOUL**. SHE'D MONTHS AGO BEEN PACKED OFF TO TOKYO **DISGUISED** AS THE CRIME-FIGHTER **RONIN** TO TRACK DOWN THE SILVER SAMURAI. AFTER THAT INTRIGUE RESOLVED ITSELF, MAYA STUCK AROUND JAPAN TO INFILTRATE AND **KEEP TABS** ON THE JAPANESE UNDERWORLD. SHE WAS MAKING GREAT HEADWAY UNTIL SHE REALIZED THAT ELEKTRA NATCHIOS HAD TAKEN LEADERSHIP OF **THE HAND**.

"TALK ABOUT YOUR TOUGH ASSIGNMENTS: PINNING DOWN ONE OF THE MOST LETHAL AND CANNY **ASSASSINS** IN THE WORLD WHO HAS JUST ASSERTED HER POWER OVER THE MOST **ORGANIZED** GANG OF MYSTICAL NINJA **CRIMINALS** THAT HAS EVER OPERATED. MAYA WAS OVERMATCHED, AND JESSICA AND HER AVENGERS WENT TO JAPAN TO **BAIL HER OUT**."

"WHAT HAPPENED NEXT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS: THE 'NEW' AVENGERS WENT TOE-TO-TOE WITH ELEKTRA AND DOZENS OF THE HAND. JESSICA SAID THE BATTLE WAS **FIERCE**, ONE OF THE MOST VICIOUSLY FOUGHT SHE COULD EVER RECALL, WITH ALL THE BLOODY NINJAS FIGHTING UNDER ELEKTRA'S COMMAND WITH A **VIGOR AND COMMITMENT** THAT SURPRISED EVERYONE. MAYA SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO END THE FIGHT BY **SLAYING ELEKTRA**.

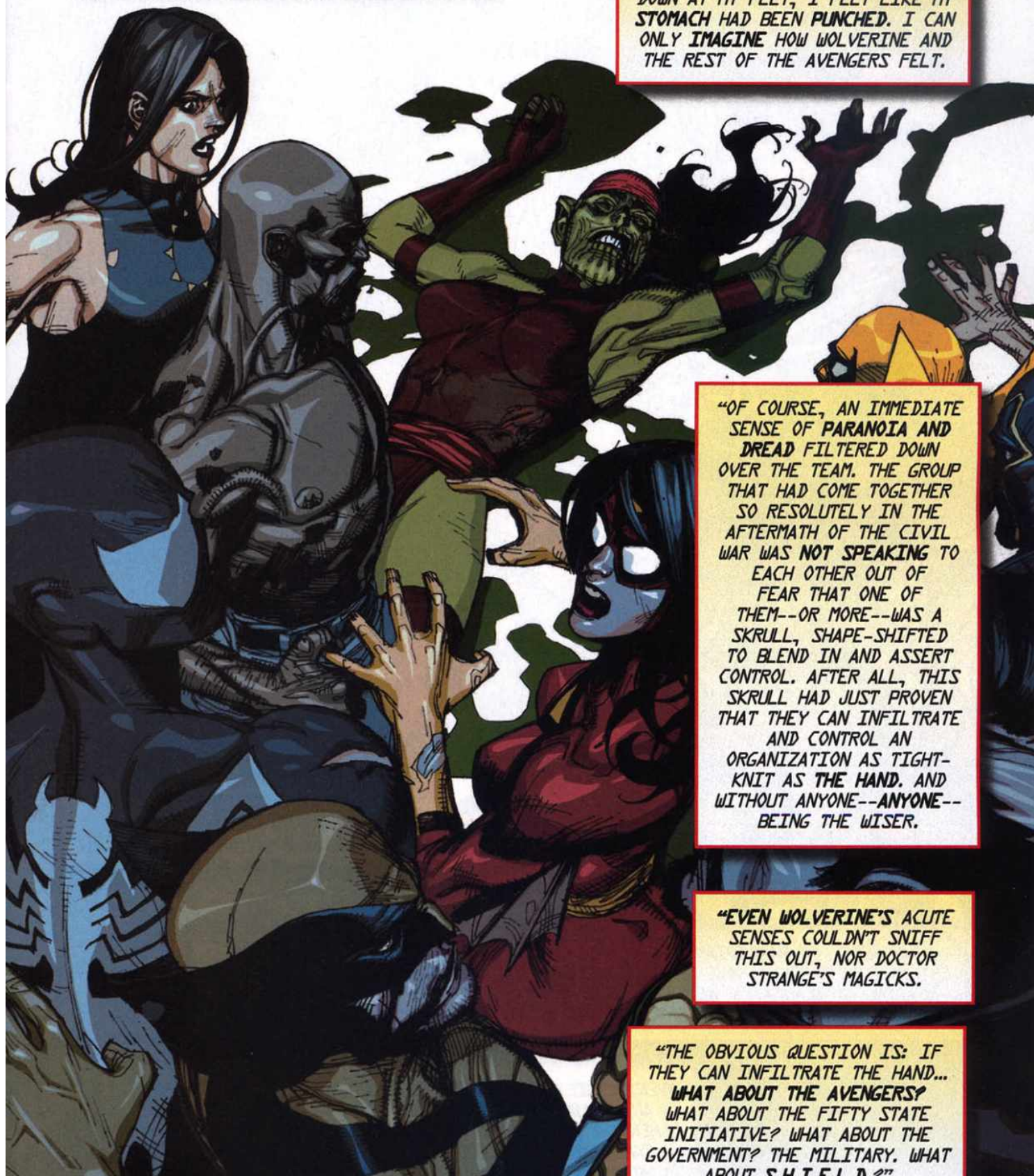
"AND THEN THE MOMENT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING: MOMENTS AFTER ELEKTRA'S DEATH, IT WAS REVEALED THAT THE ELITE ASSASSIN, THE OVERLORD OF THE HAND, WASN'T REALLY ELEKTRA AT ALL. IT WAS A **SKRULL**.

"WHEN JESSICA LAID THE BODY DOWN AT MY FEET, I FELT LIKE MY **STOMACH HAD BEEN PUNCHED**. I CAN ONLY **IMAGINE** HOW WOLVERINE AND THE REST OF THE AVENGERS FELT.

"OF COURSE, AN IMMEDIATE SENSE OF **PARANOIA AND DREAD** FILTERED DOWN OVER THE TEAM. THE GROUP THAT HAD COME TOGETHER SO RESOLUTELY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CIVIL WAR WAS **NOT SPEAKING** TO EACH OTHER OUT OF FEAR THAT ONE OF THEM--OR MORE--WAS A **SKRULL**, SHAPE-SHIFTED TO BLEND IN AND ASSERT CONTROL. AFTER ALL, THIS SKRULL HAD JUST PROVEN THAT THEY CAN INFILTRATE AND CONTROL AN ORGANIZATION AS TIGHT-KNIT AS **THE HAND**. AND WITHOUT ANYONE--ANYONE--BEING THE WISER.

"EVEN **WOLVERINE'S** ACUTE SENSES COULDN'T SNIFF THIS OUT, NOR DOCTOR STRANGE'S MAGICKS.

"THE OBVIOUS QUESTION IS: IF THEY CAN INFILTRATE THE HAND... **WHAT ABOUT THE AVENGERS? WHAT ABOUT THE FIFTY STATE INITIATIVE? WHAT ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT? THE MILITARY. WHAT ABOUT SHIELD?**"





"SPIDER-WOMAN MADE THE **DECISION** TO JOIN MY TEAM OF AVENGERS, LEAVING BEHIND HER REBEL BAND OF NEW AVENGERS IN WHAT SHE KNEW THEY WOULD TAKE AS AN **ACT OF BETRAYAL**. TOUGH CALL. BUT THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES. AND WE'RE AT THE TOP OF THE PYRAMID ON THIS THING, AND I NEED SOMEONE TO TRUST. AND I CAN TRUST SPIDER-WOMAN. I THINK.

"WHO AM I KIDDING? THERE'S **NOBODY** TO TRUST. YET.

Turns out some of my team, particularly Black Widow, weren't too keen on ushering Jessica back into the team roster, for the obvious reasons of Jessica's position in the Civil War anti-registration movement. Not to mention her myriad double-dealings as a former S.H.I.E.L.D./HYDRA double-agent.

"THE SENSE OF **PARANOIA** I'M FEELING ABOUT ALL THIS IS SOMETHING I CAN'T LET TAKE ME OVER. I HAVE TO KEEP A CLEAR HEAD AND KEEP MY WITS FOCUSED ON READING MY TEAMMATES' ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS. MOST OF THEM ARE THE SAME PEOPLE I'VE KNOWN FOR YEARS, BUT ONE OF THEM IS **VERY LIKELY** A SKRULL.

"**VERY LIKELY?** NO. **DEFINITELY.** AND AS DIRECTOR OF SHIELD AND LEADER OF THE ALLEGED NEW WORLD ORDER OF SUPER HERO HEGEMONY, COME ON. I KNOW IT'S **ME** THAT THEY'D BE TARGETING. IT WASN'T LONG AFTER JESSICA DROPPED THE BODY OFF AT MY BEDSIDE THAT THAT BECAME A REALITY."

"WITH THIS EXPLOSIVE INFORMATION, I KNEW THAT IT WAS **UP TO ME** TO MOVE THE BALL UP THE FIELD ON THIS. BUT BEFORE I TOOK IT ON AS MY **SOLE RESPONSIBILITY**, I HAD TO PRESENT THIS TO THE **ILLUMINATI**. (AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I **SELF-DEPRECATINGLY** CALL OUR LITTLE WORLD-SAVING GROUP.)



"NAMOR, BLACK BOLT, STEPHEN STRANGE, REED RICHARDS, CHARLES XAVIER. AND ME

"FOR YEARS WE HAD BEEN MEETING **CLANDESTINELY**, NOT REVEALING OUR ACTIVITIES TO ANYONE SO AS TO SAFEGUARD THE-- SHALL WE SAY--**LIBERTIES** WE WERE TAKING TO NUDGE THE SUPERHUMAN WORLD IN THE DIRECTION WE THOUGHT IT BEST TO GO. WE WERE **VERY POWERFUL** MEN, AND WE HAD A TRUST.

"BUT THAT TRUST WAS **SHATTERED** AFTER THE TWIN TRAVAILS OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THE HULK'S RAMPAGE THROUGH NEW YORK. EVERYONE HAD SOME **LEVEL** OF RESERVATION ABOUT ME--AND ABOUT THE CONTINUATION OF OUR GROUP.

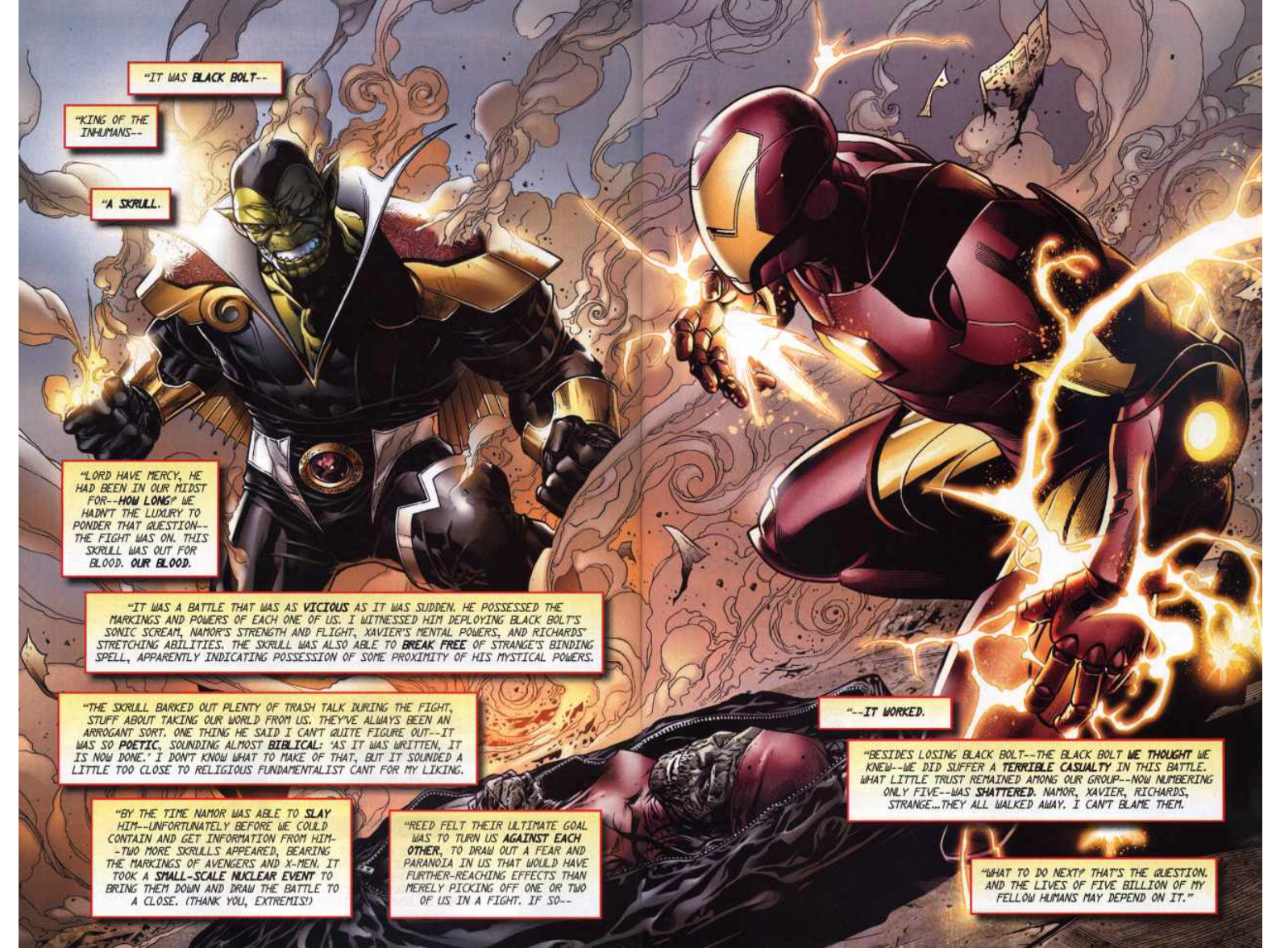
"WE HAD DONE MUCH GOOD IN OUR ROLES AS SELF-DESIGNATED **PROTECTORS** OF THE WORLD. BUT I RECALL, TOO, THE FIRST TIME WE BANNED TOGETHER IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE KREE/SKRULL WAR--MY FIRST OCCASION TO COME FACE TO FACE WITH THOSE SHAPE-SHIFTING MENACES--AND I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD. PERHAPS SOME CHICKENS HAVE COME HOME TO ROOST BECAUSE OF THE OBJECTIVES WE **ARROGANTLY** PURSUED THAT DAY. BUT I CAN'T THINK ABOUT THAT NOW...

"ALL I KNOW IS THAT THERE WAS **HEATED** DEBATE ABOUT WHAT THIS BODY MEANT. STRANGE DROVE HOME THE FACT THAT THE ELEKTRA SKRULL HAD EVADED HIS MAGIC, WOLVERINE'S MUTANT POWER AND SPIDER-MAN'S SENSES. NAMOR AND XAVIER SUGGESTED THAT THIS COULD BE JUST AN **ISOLATED INCIDENT**, LIKE MANY TIMES BEFORE, OF A SKRULL ACTING ALONE FOR WHATEVER PERSONAL MOTIVES THAT WERE DRIVING THEM.

"I MADE THE CASE THAT, BASED ON THE **ABSOLUTE UPHEAVAL** OF THE LAST YEAR -- WITH THE WORLD OF SUPERHUMANS IN **ABSOLUTE DISARRAY** AND AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS--

"--THAT THIS WAS A **PERFECT TIME** FOR THE SKRULLS TO INFILTRATE AND MANIPULATE EVENTS FOR THEIR EVIL PURPOSES. IRONICALLY, THE SAME THING WE '**ILLUMINATI**' HAD STRIVED TO DO FOR BENEVOLENT PURPOSES.

"WE HADN'T GOTTEN VERY FAR INTO OUR DEBATE WHEN THE **INEXPLICABLE** HAPPENED..."



"IT WAS BLACK BOLT--

"KING OF THE
INHUMANS--

"A SKRULL.

"LORD HAVE MERCY. HE
HAD BEEN IN OUR MIDST
FOR--HOW LONG? WE
HADN'T THE LUXURY TO
PONDER THAT QUESTION--
THE FIGHT WAS ON. THIS
SKRULL WAS OUT FOR
BLOOD. OUR BLOOD.

"IT WAS A BATTLE THAT WAS AS VICIOUS AS IT WAS SUDDEN. HE POSSESSED THE MARKINGS AND POWERS OF EACH ONE OF US. I WITNESSED HIM DEPLOYING BLACK BOLT'S SONIC SCREAM, NAMOR'S STRENGTH AND FLIGHT, XAVIER'S MENTAL POWERS, AND RICHARDS' STRETCHING ABILITIES. THE SKRULL WAS ALSO ABLE TO BREAK FREE OF STRANGE'S BINDING SPELL, APPARENTLY INDICATING POSSESSION OF SOME PROXIMITY OF HIS MYSTICAL POWERS.

"THE SKRULL BARKED OUT PLENTY OF TRASH TALK DURING THE FIGHT, STUFF ABOUT TAKING OUR WORLD FROM US. THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN AN ARROGANT SORT. ONE THING HE SAID I CAN'T QUITE FIGURE OUT--IT WAS SO POETIC, SOUNDING ALMOST BIBLICAL: 'AS IT WAS WRITTEN, IT IS NOW DONE.' I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THAT, BUT IT SOUNDED A LITTLE TOO CLOSE TO RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALIST CANT FOR MY LIKING.

"BY THE TIME NAMOR WAS ABLE TO SLAY HIM--UNFORTUNATELY BEFORE WE COULD CONTAIN AND GET INFORMATION FROM HIM--TWO MORE SKRULLS APPEARED, BEARING THE MARKINGS OF AVENGERS AND X-MEN. IT TOOK A SMALL-SCALE NUCLEAR EVENT TO BRING THEM DOWN AND DRAW THE BATTLE TO A CLOSE. (THANK YOU, EXTREMES!)

"REED FELT THEIR ULTIMATE GOAL WAS TO TURN US AGAINST EACH OTHER. TO DRAW OUT A FEAR AND PARANOIA IN US THAT WOULD HAVE FURTHER-REACHING EFFECTS THAN MERELY PICKING OFF ONE OR TWO OF US IN A FIGHT. IF SO--

"--IT WORKED.

"BESIDES LOSING BLACK BOLT--THE BLACK BOLT WE THOUGHT WE KNEW--WE DID SUFFER A TERRIBLE CASUALTY IN THIS BATTLE. WHAT LITTLE TRUST REMAINED AMONG OUR GROUP--NOW NUMBERING ONLY FIVE--WAS SHATTERED. NAMOR, XAVIER, RICHARDS, STRANGE...THEY ALL WALKED AWAY. I CAN'T BLAME THEM.

"WHAT TO DO NEXT? THAT'S THE QUESTION. AND THE LIVES OF FIVE BILLION OF MY FELLOW HUMANS MAY DEPEND ON IT."



"FIGURING OUT WHAT TO DO NEXT WILL FIRST REQUIRE **LOOKING BACK**. MUCH OF THE HISTORY MARIA'S DATA-MINING TASK FORCE HAS GENERATED I ALREADY KNOW, EITHER THROUGH MY OWN EXPERIENCE, COMBING THROUGH THE OLD AVENGERS FILES OR THROUGH SHOP TALK WITH MY FELLOW SUPERHUMANS. BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO REFRESH MY MEMORY, WHICH IS OFTEN A HAZY THING, AND **DOUBLY SO** WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH AN **INSIDIOUS** FORM OF VILLAINY LIKE SKRULLS.

"WHAT ARE SKRULLS AND WHAT DO THEY DO? THOSE ARE TWO QUESTIONS I HOPE AREN'T ON THE TONGUES OF THE WORLD'S POPULACE **ANYTIME** SOON. BUT IN CASE THEY ARE, HERE ARE THE KNOWN FACTS:

"THE SKRULLS ARE A HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD CIVILIZATION THAT HAILS ORIGINALLY FROM THE PLANET **SKRULLOS** IN THE ANDROMEDA GALAXY. THEY EVENTUALLY BECAME **VORACIOUS** IMPERIALISTS, GOBBLING UP NEARLY A **THOUSAND** PLANETS IN ANDROMEDA FOR THEIR RULE. A HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THEY MOVED THE SEAT OF THEIR GALACTIC EMPIRE TO TARNAX IV, MORE COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS **THRONEWORLD**. IT IS FROM HERE THAT THEY MADE THEIR FIRST DESIGNS ON EARTH.

"SKRULL BIOLOGY IS A **FASCINATING** THING: AFTER A HIGHLY SELECTIVE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, THE OFFSHOOT OF SKRULLS THAT COULD ALTER THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR BODY BECAME DOMINANT. WITH GREEN SKIN, POINTY EARS AND THEIR TRADEMARK RIDGED CHINS, THEY ARE **HIGHLY RECOGNIZABLE** IN THEIR ESSENTIAL FORM, BUT CAN QUICKLY ALTER THEIR SIZE, SHAPE AND COLOR INTO VIRTUALLY ANYTHING--VEGETABLE, ANIMAL OR MINERAL. WHATEVER THEY CAN IMAGINE, THEY CAN IMITATE.

"HOWEVER, THE EARLIEST SKRULL ENCOUNTERS SHOWED THAT MOST SKRULLS COULD NOT TAKE ON THE **TRAITS** OF THE PEOPLE OR FORMS THEY WERE MIMICKING, MERELY THE IMAGE AND PROPORTION OF THEM--ALTHOUGH AFTER **YEARS** OF HIGHLY-ADVANCED GENETIC MODIFICATIONS, AND INITIAL SUCCESSES LIKE THEIR SUPER-SKRULLS, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW SKRULL SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ADAPT DNA CODES TO ALLOW THEIR SPECIES TO BE EVEN **MORE SLIPPERY** WITH THEIR SHAPE-CHANGING THAN THEY ALREADY ARE."



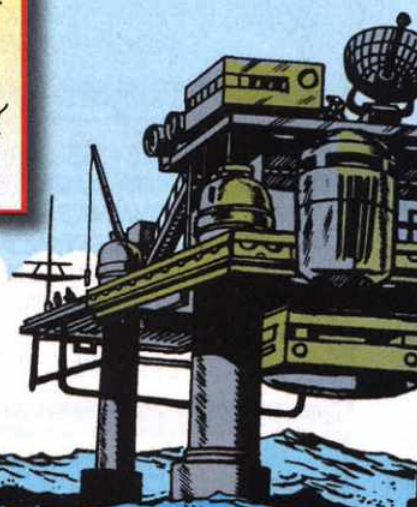
"THE FIRST KNOWN SKRULL APPEARANCE ON EARTH-- IF MY TIME-TRAVELING, HONORARY AVENGER BUDDY **TWO-GUN KID** IS TO BE BELIEVED--WAS DURING A RUN-IN HIS FELLOW COWBOY **KID COLT** HAD WITH SOME SKRULLS TRYING TO CLAIM THE **OLD WEST** IN THE NAME OF THE SKRULL EMPIRE. HE AND HIS PARTNER, THE **ARIZONA GIRL**, MANAGED TO WIPE OUT A **WHOLE TOWN** FULL OF SKRULLS, PRESUMABLY ENDING THAT CELL'S AMBITIONS.



"DECADES LATER, ACCORDING TO REED RICHARDS' FILES, A SKRULL SLAVE SHIP ARRIVED ON EARTH LOOKING TO **ABDUCT** EARTHLINGS. A NOTABLE ABDUCTEE WAS "**MACHINE GUN**" **MARTIN**, AN ESCAPED KILLER FROM PRISON AND UNREPENTANT **GANGSTER**, WHO THEY FERRIED AWAY IN CHAINS TO **PLANET KRAL** IN THE **ANDROMEDA** SYSTEM.

"DETAILS OF THE NEXT ENCOUNTERS, INCLUDING AN ATTEMPT TO INFLAME COLD WAR TENSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND RUSSIA DURING THE 1950'S, ARE VAGUE, BUT BY THE TIME THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES AS THE WORLD'S FIRST GREAT SUPER HEROES, THE HISTORICAL DATA BECOMES MUCH MORE **RELIABLE**. AFTER ALL, VIRTUALLY ALL THE EARLY SKRULL RUN-INS WERE WITH THE FF -- AND FOR THOSE WHO CAN INTERPRET THEM, REED RICHARDS KEEPS GOOD NOTES!

"THE FIRST TIME THE SKRULLS MENACED THE FF WAS A **WATERSHED** MOMENT FOR SUPERHUMANS AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE CITIZENRY THEY PROTECT. A TEAM OF FOUR SKRULL SABOTEURS **POSED** AS EACH OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND--AUGMENTED BY DEVICES THAT ALLOWED THEM TO **MIMIC** THE FOURSOME'S POWERS--WENT ON A CRUSADE TO **PUBLICLY EMBARRASS** THEM. THE PUBLIC BORE WITNESS TO THE THING DEMOLISHING AN OIL RIG, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN STEALING VALUABLE JEWELRY, THE HUMAN TORCH ENGAGING IN VANDALISM, AND MISTER FANTASTIC WRECKING PUBLIC WORKS SYSTEMS. THE PUBLIC WAS **OUTRAGED**, THE FF WERE SUDDENLY PUBLIC ENEMIES AND WERE FORCED INTO HIDING."



"BUT AS WE KNOW, THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE **NOTHING** IF NOT RESOURCEFUL, AND AFTER THE **IGNOMINY** OF HAVING THEIR GOOD NAMES BLEMISHED BY THESE ALIEN MISCREANTS, THEY TURNED THE TABLES ON THE SKRULLS, **FOOLING THEM** INTO REVEALING THEIR TRUE NATURES TO THE WORLD. REED NOBLY PAID A PERSONAL VISIT TO THE ORBITING **SKRULL WARSHIP**. THERE HE BLUFFED THE SHIP COMMANDER WITH TALES OF 'GIANT MONSTERS' AND 'POWERFUL WARRIORS' WHO WOULD **FIGHT THEM** TO THE DEATH.



"IT MAY SOUND **RIDICULOUS** NOW, BUT THIS RUSE SCARED AWAY THE MASSIVE WARSHIP. AT THE TIME, THERE WAS NO **NETWORK** OF SUPER HEROES, NO **50 STATE INITIATIVE** OR OTHER ELITE GROUP ORGANIZED TO STAND IN THEIR WAY. THE FANTASTIC FOUR WERE THE **ONLY ONES** CAPABLE OF STANDING BETWEEN THE SKRULLS AND EARTH, AND **THEY DID SO** WITH GREAT **INGENUITY** AND **COURAGE**.



"AND SPEAKING OF THAT **INGENUITY**, I HAVE TO **LAUGH** WHEN I RECALL THE METHOD REED USED TO TAKE CARE OF THE **CAPTIVE SKRULLS** FROM THE SEARCH PARTY. HE FORCED THE CRINGING, COWARDLY SKRULLS TO **CHANGE INTO COWS**, THEN **HYPNOTIZED** THEM SO THEY'D BE CONTENT WITH THEIR NEW FORMS. REED WOULD LATER REGRET THIS PLAN, AS IT WAS HARDLY **FOOLPROOF** AND THE SKRULLS WOULD **EVENTUALLY ESCAPE** THEIR FATE, BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE HIS SENSE OF **HUMOR. COWS!**

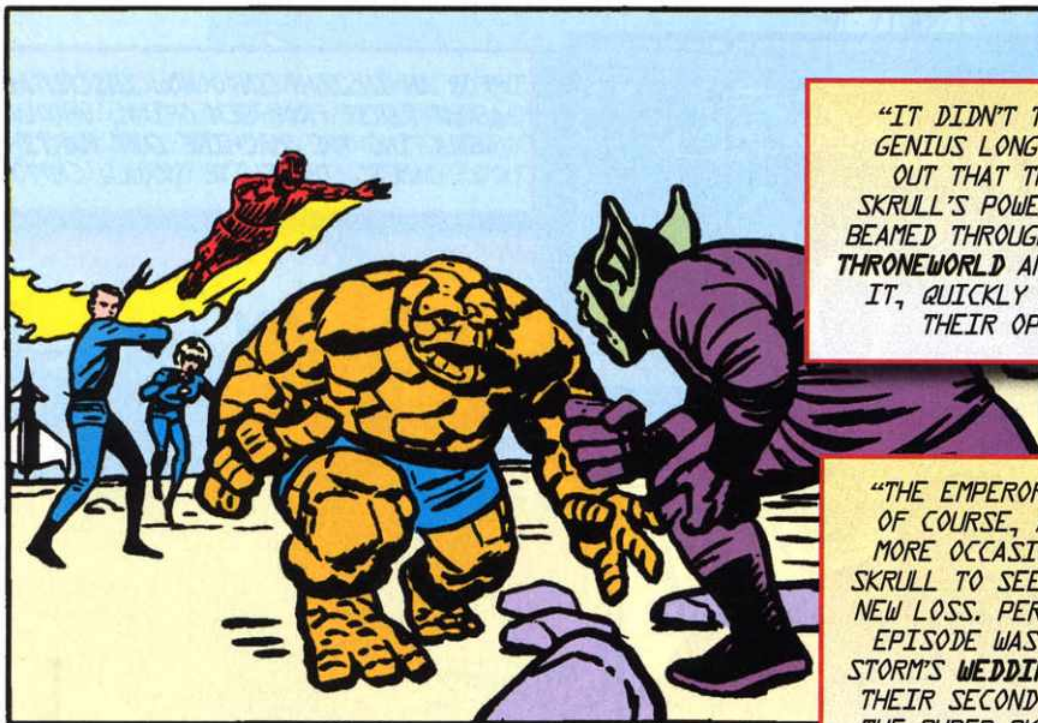
"OF COURSE, IN THE INTERVENING MONTHS, THE SKRULLS WOULD REALIZE HOW AUDACIOUSLY THEY WERE FOOLED BY THE FF, AND NATURALLY, THEY WOULD **SEEK REVENGE**. AND THEY WOULD DO SO IN A MANNER THAT SHOWED THEY WEREN'T **INTERESTED** IN BEING TIMID ABOUT IT: AFTER EMPTYING HIS TREASURY AND DEDICATING THE TALENTS OF HIS BEST SCIENTIFIC MINDS, EMPEROR DORREK UNVEILED THE SUPER-SKRULL TO **ERADICATE** EARTH'S PRIMARY DEFENDERS, THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

"JUST WHO IS THE SUPER-SKRULL? AS THE FF WERE SOON TO FIND OUT, HE WAS AN IMMENSELY **POWERFUL** SKRULL — FAR MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE STANDARD ISSUE SORTS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY SLUNK ONTO THE PLANET. DESIGNED BY SKRULL SCIENTISTS TO **SIMULATE** THE POWERS OF EACH MEMBER OF THE FF, THE SUPER-SKRULL COULD **STRETCH**, **FLAME ON**, **TURN INVISIBLE** AND PACK A MASSIVELY **POWERFUL PUNCH**. THE SKRULL VERSION OF THE **SUPER-SOLDIER**, DORREK SET HIM FREE ON EARTH TO **PLAY**.



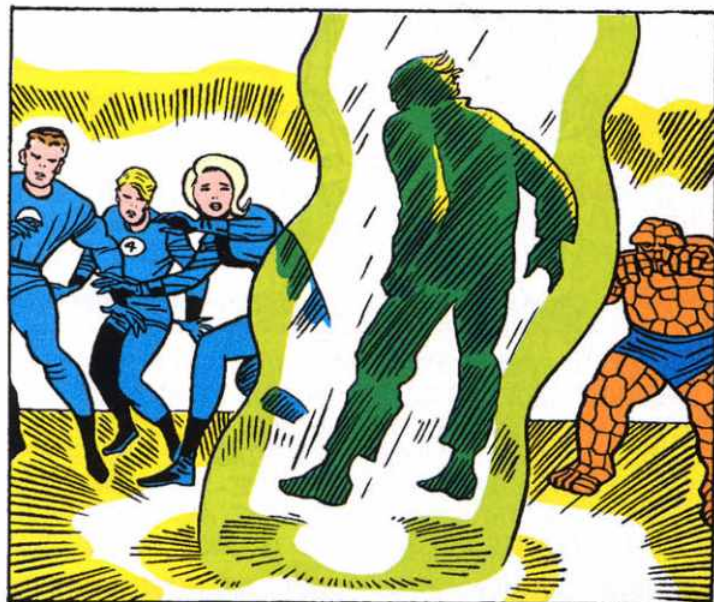
"HIS FIRST ACT WAS TO LAND IN **TIMES SQUARE** AND CLAIM EARTH IN THE NAME OF THE IMPERIAL SKRULL EMPIRE. THE FF WERE QUICK TO ACT, BUT THE SUPER-SKRULL STUNNED THEM WITH HIS **FIGHTING ABILITIES**. HE REVEALED THE TRADEMARK SKRULL ATTRIBUTE OF **ARROGANCE**, THOUGH, WHEN INSTEAD OF DELIVERING THE KILLING BLOW, HE BEGAN TO **TOY WITH** THE FF LONG ENOUGH FOR REED TO **FIGURE OUT** HOW TO STOP HIM."





"IT DIDN'T TAKE REED'S GENIUS LONG TO FIGURE OUT THAT THE SUPER-SKRULL'S POWER WAS BEING BEAMED THROUGH SPACE FROM **THRONEWORLD** AND HE BLOCKED IT, QUICKLY **DEPOWERING** THEIR OPPONENT.

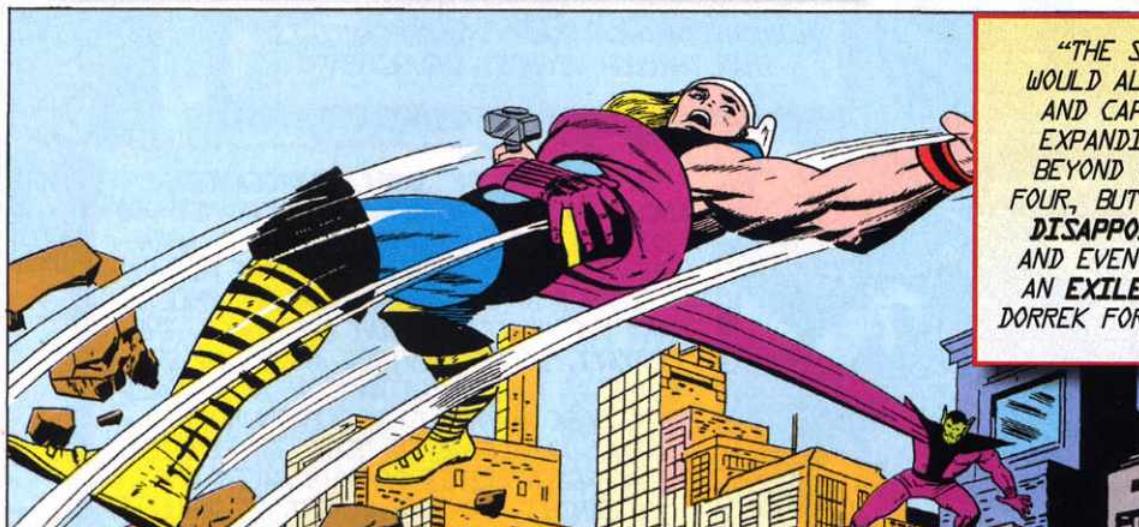
"THE EMPEROR WOULD BE FURIOUS, OF COURSE, AND THERE WOULD BE MORE OCCASIONS FOR THE SUPER-SKRULL TO SEEK **REVENGE** UPON EACH NEW LOSS. PERHAPS THE WORST SUCH EPISODE WAS WHEN REED AND SUE STORM'S **WEDDING** WAS LOOMING, WHEN THEIR SECOND CONFRONTATION WITH THE SUPER-SKRULL ENDED WITH THE TRAGIC DEATH OF SUE AND JOHNNY'S FATHER, DR. FRANKLIN STORM. THE MONSTERS TOOK THIS **INNOCENT MAN** HOSTAGE AND THEN RETURNED HIM TO EARTH WITH A 'SUICIDE BOMB' ATTACHED TO HIS BODY.



"DR. STORM TOOK THE **FULL IMPACT** OF THE BOMB SO THE EXPLOSION DIDN'T HURT ANYONE ELSE AND WAS **KILLED** INSTANTLY. HIS MURDER BY THE SKRULLS--AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY **UNLEASHED** THEIR TREACHERY--IS SOMETHING THAT HAUNTS ME TO THIS DAY.



"THE SUPER-SKRULL WOULD ALSO FIGHT THOR AND CAPTAIN MARVEL, EXPANDING HIS REACH BEYOND THE FANTASTIC FOUR, BUT **CONTINUING TO DISAPPOINT** IN BATTLE AND EVENTUALLY EARNING AN **EXILE** FROM EMPEROR DORREK FOR HIS FAILURES."





"FOR AN INSIGHT INTO HOW **INSCRUTABLE** THE SKRULLS CAN OFTEN BE, THERE'S **THIS FILE** ON PLANET KRAL IV. THIS IS AN **ODD LOCALE** I HEARD ABOUT FIRST FROM BEN GRIMM, WHO WAS TO EXPERIENCE FIRSTHAND THE **ABSDURD** LENGTHS SKRULLS WILL GO TO ADAPT INTO A NEW CULTURE. AFTER ABDUCTING THE **'MACHINE GUN' MARTIN** AND SCURRYING HIM OFF TO KRAL TO PERFORM AS A SLAVE IN THE GLADIATORIAL COMBAT OF THEIR 'GREAT GAMES', THE ELITE SKRULL CAPTORS BECAME SO ENAMORED WITH HIS CHARISMATIC PROHIBITION STYLE THAT THEY BEGAN TO **EMULATE** IT.

"SOON, SKRULLS EVERYWHERE HAD TAKEN ON THE VISAGE OF MARTIN AND HIS LOWER EAST SIDE MORES, TOTING AROUND **TOMMY GUNS**, HANGING OUT AT **SPEAKEASIES**, AND CARRYING ON WITH THE VERNAICULAR OF AL CAPONE. **GANGSTER CHIC** BECAME A WORLDWIDE SENSATION, AND THE SKRULL SOCIETY ON KRAL IV SOMEHOW DEVELOPED TO THE POINT WHERE ITS DENIZENS WERE **MORE THAN HAPPY** TO SWITCH OVER TO THE LIFESTYLE PERMANENTLY.

"IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FF, THE THING WAS **KIDNAPPED** BY A SKRULL SLAVER AND SOLD INTO COMBAT IN THE ARENA FOR THE GANGSTERS BETTING AMUSEMENT--THEIR **NATIONAL PASTIME**. REED RICHARDS MANAGED TO TRACK DOWN HIS FRIEND'S WHEREABOUTS AND LED THE REST OF THE TEAM TO KRAL TO HELP BEN **ESCAPE**. SINCE THEN, THERE HAVE BEEN MULTIPLE ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE KRALIANS: IN FACT, ACCORDING TO INFORMATION GLEANED FROM WAKANDAN INTELLIGENCE, THE **BLACK PANTHER-LED FANTASTIC FOUR** RECENTLY WOUND UP ON KRAL AND THE GANGSTER LIFESTYLE APPEARED TO BE EVEN MORE AMPLIFIED THAN ON BEN'S FIRST VISIT.

"SOME MIGHT SCOFF AT THE SEEMING **PREPOSTEROUSNESS** OF KRAL AND THINK IT A REASON TO TAKE THE SKRULLS LIGHTLY. AS IF THEY'RE BUDDIES OR CLOWNS, **CASUAL MENACES** THAT WHEN BALANCED AGAINST THE OTHER THREATS OUR WORLD MIGHT FACE ARE WORTH TAKING LIGHTLY. TO THAT I SUGGEST THEY ASK THE THING HOW MUCH FUN IT WAS TO BE **ENSLAVED AND TORTURED** BY THE KRALIAN GAMERS. ON THE CONTRARY, I THINK THE PREPOSTEROUSNESS ONE SEES ON THE SURFACE SIMPLY PROVES HOW **IRRATIONAL** THEY CAN BE, AND HOW THAT IRRATIONALITY CAN SO QUICKLY **TRANSFORM** A CULTURE INSIDE AND OUT. HOW DO YOU **STRATEGIZE** AGAINST A SPECIES THAT IS CAPABLE OF SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

"AN ADDED COMPLICATION TO DEALING WITH THE SKRULLS IS THEIR EONS LONG WAR WITH THE KREE, CERTAINLY THE MOST DECISIVE INFLUENCE ON THEIR EVOLUTION INTO THE WARLIKE FIENDS THEY ARE NOW. THE KREE ARE NO BUNDLE OF FUN, EITHER--SOMETHING I LEARNED **FIRSTHAND** ON A JOURNEY TO THE PAST COURTESY OF THE TIME-TRAVELING IMMORTUS. ON OFFICIAL AVENGERS BUSINESS, THOR, HAWKEYE AND I ACCOMPANIED OUR ENIGMATIC TEAMMATE **MANTIS** AS SHE TRIED TO UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF HER ORIGIN.

"OUR FIRST STOP WAS IN A TIME ALMOST TEN MILLION YEARS AGO, DURING **KREE YEAR ZERO**, WHERE IMMORTUS' MACHINATIONS HELPED US SEE WITH OUR OWN EYES THE **FLASHPOINT** OF KREE/SKRULL ANTAGONISM. AS IT TURNS OUT, AT THAT TIME THE SKRULLS, LED BY EMPEROR DORREK I, WERE A RACE MORE INTERESTED IN BUILDING HARMONY THROUGH TRADE AND MERCANTILISM THAN THROUGH VIOLENT SUBJUGATION.

"A TINGE OF THE **SKRULL ARROGANCE** WE KNOW TODAY WAS PRESENT IN THEIR METHODS OF EXTENDING THEIR BENEVOLENCE: WHEN THEY ARRIVED ON **HALA**, THE HOME PLANET SHARED BY THE CRUDE, WARLIKE **KREE** AND THE PEACEFUL PLANT CREATURES, THE **COTATI**. DORREK DEvised A TEST TO SEE WHICH OF THE INHABITANTS OF HALA WOULD BE **MORE WORTHY** TO RECEIVE ADVANCED SKRULL KNOWLEDGE IN TRADE. HE FERRIED REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH RACES OFF TO EARTH'S MOON FOR A SORT OF SKRULL VERSION OF **'SURVIVOR'**.

"THE KREE LOST THE CHALLENGE TO THE COTATI, AND THEY **DID NOT** TAKE LOSING WELL. THE BARBARIC KREE LED AN **ASSAULT** ON THE SKRULL DELEGATION SUPERVISING THE CONTEST, USING THE SECRETS GLEANED FROM THE SKRULL TECHNOLOGY, AND EMBOLDENED BY THEIR **DOMINATION** OF THE SKRULLS, THE KREE BUILT UP GLEANING CITIES BASED ON SKRULL TECH. DECADES LATER, THEY ADDED **FURTHER INSULT** TO THE SKRULLS BY LAUNCHING AN ATTACK ON THEIR HOMEWORLD WITHOUT WARNING, THIS IGNITING A **FIERCE RIVALRY** THAT INEVITABLY FORCED THE SKRULLS TO ADAPT INTO THEIR BLOOD-THIRSTY, WARLIKE WAYS. THIS **KREE/SKRULL WAR** WOULD LAST FOR EONS AND CLAIM BILLIONS OF LIVES.

"THAT RIVALRY STILL EXISTS TO THIS DAY. BUT IT HAS BEEN A WAR THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONTAINED LARGELY TO THEIR RESPECTIVE GALAXIES. **UNTIL RECENTLY...**"

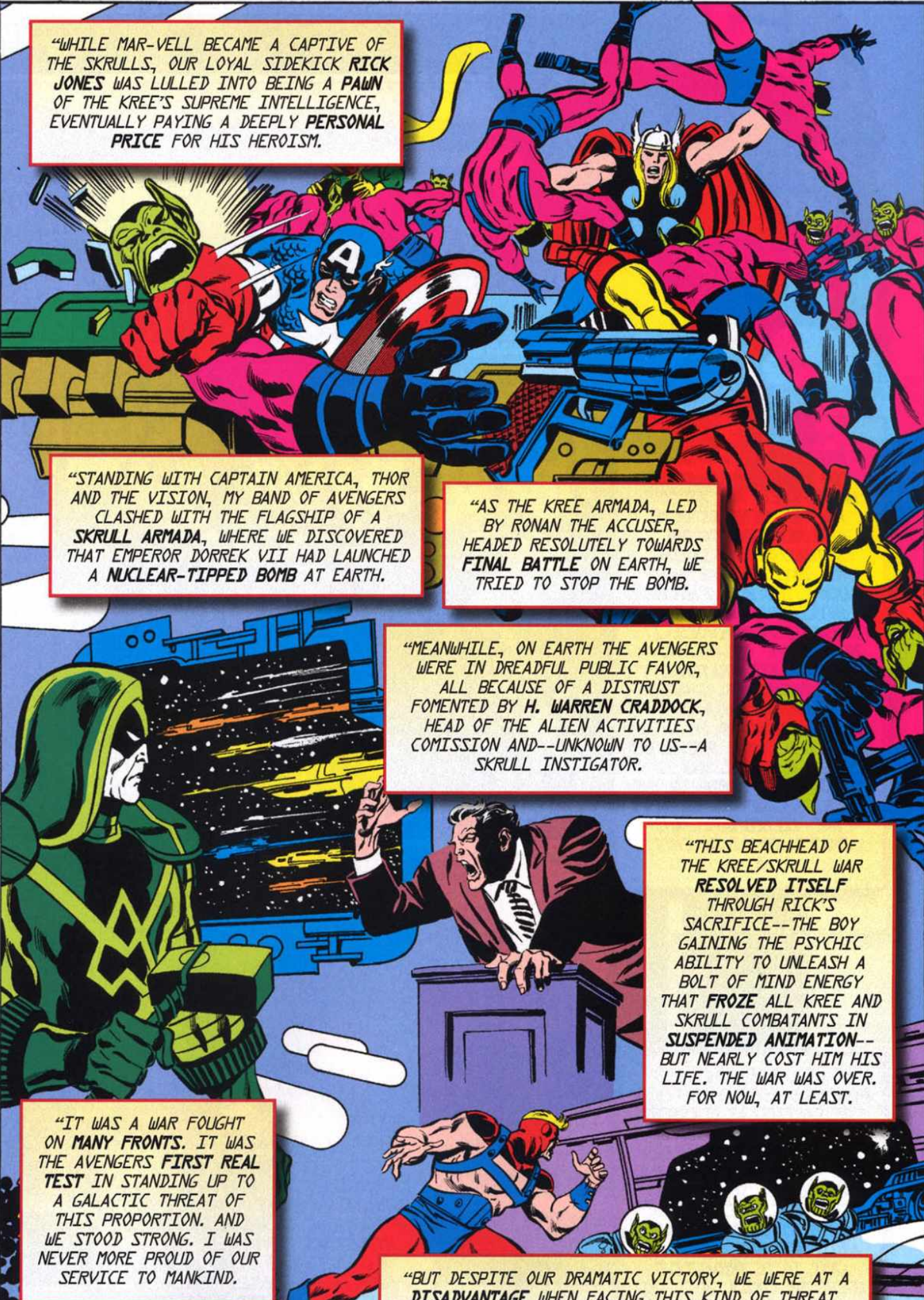


"THE KREE/SKRULL WAR **FINALLY**
CAME TO MENACE EARTH.

"WITH OUR PLANET THE **MIDWAY**
POINT BETWEEN ANDROMEDA AND
KREE GALAXIES, IT WAS OF
UTMOST **STRATEGIC VALUE**, THE
LATEST PAWN IN AN ETERNALLY
RENEWED **CYCLE OF WAR**. BUT WE
HEROES OF EARTH WERE NOT GOING
TO HAVE THAT. **NOT ON OUR WATCH**.

"JOINED BY THE
HEROIC **CAPTAIN**
MARVEL,
HIMSELF A
CONFLICTED
KREE, WE
REPELLED THE
MACHINATIONS
OF BOTH SIDES
TO GAIN
SUPREMACY OVER
THE OTHER BY
TAKING OVER
OUR 'BACKWATER'
PLANET.





"WHILE MAR-VELL BECAME A CAPTIVE OF THE SKRULLS, OUR LOYAL SIDEKICK RICK JONES WAS LULLED INTO BEING A PAWN OF THE KREE'S SUPREME INTELLIGENCE, EVENTUALLY PAYING A DEEPLY PERSONAL PRICE FOR HIS HEROISM.

"STANDING WITH CAPTAIN AMERICA, THOR AND THE VISION, MY BAND OF AVENGERS CLASHED WITH THE FLAGSHIP OF A SKRULL ARMADA, WHERE WE DISCOVERED THAT EMPEROR DORREK VII HAD LAUNCHED A NUCLEAR-TIPPED BOMB AT EARTH.

"AS THE KREE ARMADA, LED BY RONAN THE ACCUSER, HEADED RESOLUTELY TOWARDS FINAL BATTLE ON EARTH, WE TRIED TO STOP THE BOMB.

"MEANWHILE, ON EARTH THE AVENGERS WERE IN DREADFUL PUBLIC FAVOR, ALL BECAUSE OF A DISTRUST FOMENTED BY H. WARREN CRADDOCK, HEAD OF THE ALIEN ACTIVITIES COMMISSION AND--UNKNOWN TO US--A SKRULL INSTIGATOR.

"THIS BEACHHEAD OF THE KREE/SKRULL WAR RESOLVED ITSELF THROUGH RICK'S SACRIFICE--THE BOY GAINING THE PSYCHIC ABILITY TO UNLEASH A BOLT OF MIND ENERGY THAT FROZE ALL KREE AND SKRULL COMBATANTS IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION--BUT NEARLY COST HIM HIS LIFE. THE WAR WAS OVER. FOR NOW, AT LEAST.

"IT WAS A WAR FOUGHT ON MANY FRONTS. IT WAS THE AVENGERS FIRST REAL TEST IN STANDING UP TO A GALACTIC THREAT OF THIS PROPORTION. AND WE STOOD STRONG. I WAS NEVER MORE PROUD OF OUR SERVICE TO MANKIND.

"BUT DESPITE OUR DRAMATIC VICTORY, WE WERE AT A DISADVANTAGE WHEN FACING THIS KIND OF THREAT. AND I KNEW SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE ABOUT THAT."



"HERE WE WERE, ON A SUPER-SECRET MISSION BORNE OF NAÏVE BRAVADO, COUNTLESS LIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM OUR HOME PLANET. AND THE WORST HAPPENED. OUR ESCAPE PLAN DIDN'T QUITE WORK OUT AS PLANNED AND WE WERE TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY. ALL OF US SUFFERED THROUGH THE MOST TERRIBLE TORTURES IMAGINABLE - ALL WHILE MEN OF SKRULL SCIENCE STOOD OVER US, OBSERVING OMINOUSLY."

"THE STAKES OF THE KREE/SKRULL WAR WERE TOO HIGH FOR US TO BE UNPREPARED. AND AS GOOD AS THE AVENGERS WERE IN REACTING TO THE SITUATION AND SAVING THE DAY, WE WERE ALSO LUCKY. THE WORLD NEEDED BETTER THAN 'GOOD BUT LUCKY' SUPER HEROES. IT NEEDED THE ORGANIZATION OF AN ELITE FRATERNITY OF SUPERHUMANS, SHARING INFORMATION IN A COMMON CAUSE--THE KIND OF THING THAT COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE KREE/SKRULL WAR FROM THREATENING EARTH IN THE FIRST PLACE. IT NEEDED THE 'ILLUMINATI'. AND THAT'S WHAT I GAVE IT."



"WHAT THEY LEARNED FROM US DURING THAT TIME, WHAT THEY PULLED FROM OUR PHYSIOLOGY, OUR DNA, THE OBJECTS AND ARTIFACTS OF OUR POWER..."

"I ASSEMBLED THE MOST POWERFUL REPRESENTATIVES OF EARTH'S SUPERHUMANS AND SECRETLY ORGANIZED THEM TO SHAPE THE WORLD AROUND US. SO WE WERE BETTER EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH SITUATIONS THAT AROSE WITHOUT WARNING--AND TO BE PROACTIVE WHERE WE COULD. JUST THE ADVANTAGE WE'D NEED."



"OUR FIRST JOURNEY WAS TO THRONEWORLD TO DELIVER A CLEAR WARNING TO EMPEROR DORREK THAT THE EARTH WOULD BROOK NO FURTHER INTRUSIONS FROM THEIR PEOPLE. THAT WE WOULD STAND UP AND FIGHT--AND WE WOULD BRING THAT FIGHT WITH ALL ITS FEROCITY TO THEIR WORLD AND THEIR PEOPLE."



"WELL, I WOULD HAVE DONE SIMILAR STUDIES HAD I BEEN IN THEIR POSITION. (MINUS THE TORTURE, OF COURSE.) I'M SURE THEY BUILT AN EFFECTIVE DATABASE ON US, TO TRIANGULATE THEIR WAY TO MIMICKING OUR BEST ATTRIBUTES. I THINK THE RECENT ATTACK OF HYPER-POWERED SUPER-SKRULLS ON OUR LAST SECRET MEETING IS PROOF OF THAT. AND COULD IT POSSIBLY BE THAT BLACK BOLT WAS EXCHANGED FOR A SKRULL IMPOSTOR AS FAR BACK AS THEN? IT'S TOO SCARY TO THINK ABOUT..."



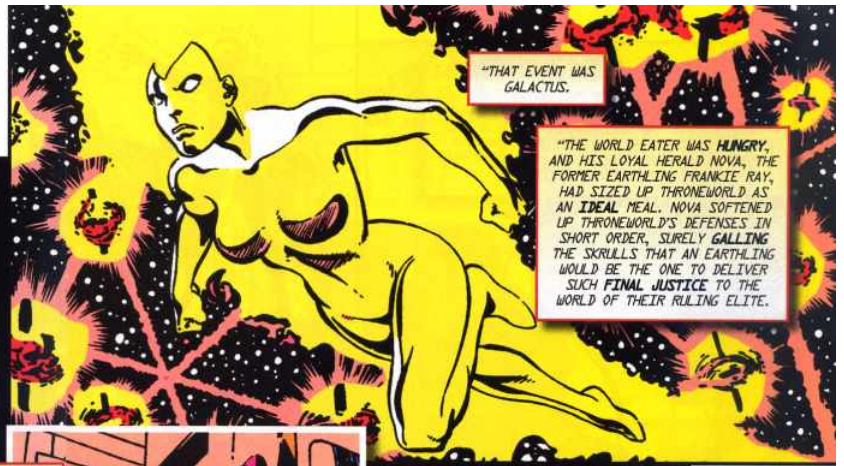
"BUT LOOKING BACK AT THIS ENGAGEMENT...HOW DID THE SKRULLS REACT TO THE ENDING OF THE KREE/SKRULL WAR? TO THE MESSAGE WE HAD SENT TO THEM, ONE SENT IN PERSON AND WITH MAXIMUM VIOLENCE TO PUNCTUATE ITS INTENT? WHAT WERE THEIR NEXT MOVES?"



"CROSS-REFERENCING ARCHIVED NOVA CORPS FILES AND REED RICHARDS' IN-DEPTH NOTES, THERE WAS SOME DEADLY IN-FIGHTING GOING ON AT THRONEWORLD NOT LONG AFTER THE KREE/SKRULL WAR LEFT EARTH'S GALAXY. THE ASSASSINATION OF EMPEROR DORREK VII OCCURRED AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF AN ALL-OUT MILITARY ATTACK ON THE PEACEFUL XANDARIANS. INEVITABLY, THE XANDARIANS--WITH THE AID OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--FOUGHT OFF THE SKRULLS, BUT THE COUP GOING ON IN THE BACKGROUND WAS QUICK AND LETHAL.



"THE SHOCKING PERPETRATOR OF THE COUP WAS EMPRESS R'KLLL, DORREK VII'S WIFE. UNABLE TO CONTROL HER ANGER OVER DORREK'S CONSISTENTLY CALLOW AND WEAK APPROACH TO HIS RULE, SHE CUT HIM DOWN AND IMMEDIATELY TOOK UP CONTROL OF THRONEWORLD.



"THAT EVENT WAS GALACTUS.

"THE WORLD EATER WAS HUNGRY, AND HIS LOYAL HERALD NOVA, THE FORMER EARTHLING FRANKIE RAY, HAD SIZED UP THRONEWORLD AS AN IDEAL MEAL. NOVA SOFTENED UP THRONEWORLD'S DEFENSES IN SHORT ORDER, SURELY GALLING THE SKRULLS THAT AN EARTHLING WOULD BE THE ONE TO DELIVER SUCH FINAL JUSTICE TO THE WORLD OF THEIR RULING ELITE.

"ONE OF THE FIRST ACTS OF POWER WE KNOW OF FROM EMPRESS R'KLLL WAS HER INSTALLATION OF WARLORD RAKSOR, A SUPERIOR SKRULL FIGHTER, ON THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON TO MONITOR THE TRIAL OF JEAN GREY, THE DARK PHOENIX. BEFORE THAT TITANIC STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE X-MEN AND THE SHI'AR COULD BE CONCLUDED, RAKSOR FOUND HIMSELF IN A STRUGGLE OF HIS OWN WITH FELLOW MONITOR, THE KREE COLONEL BEL-DANN. SO INSPIRING WAS THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE TWO THAT R'KLLL AND THE KREE'S SUPREME INTELLIGENCE DECIDED THAT THEIR FIGHT, WHICH WAS STILL ONGOING, WOULD BE THE PROXY WAR THAT WOULD BRING THE KREE/SKRULL WAR TO AN OFFICIAL CLOSE.



"SHORTLY AFTER THRONEWORLD'S ARMADA AND DEFENSE SYSTEMS WERE HUMILIATINGLY DISMANTLED, GALACTUS BEGAN TO CONSUME THE PLANET. THE LAST TELEMETRY FROM THRONEWORLD INDICATED THAT EMPRESS R'KLLL WAS TOTALLY AWARE OF HER FATE, AS WAS HER DAUGHTER, PRINCESS ANELLE.



"IT WAS A SHAME THAT ANELLE MET HER DEATH ON THAT DAY. SHE WAS ONE OF THE FEW SKRULLS THAT STOOD OUT AS WILLING TO LIVE FOR PEACE, WITHOUT A TRACE OF BLOODTHIRSTINESS WITHIN HER. A RARE EXAMPLE FOR THE SKRULLS, EVEN RARER AFTER THE PLANET'S TOTAL DESTRUCTION."



"THE PAIR FOUGHT IN THE CATACOMBS OF THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON FOR MONTHS, AWARE OF THE STAKES OF THEIR FIGHT BUT OBLIVIOUS TO THE UPHEAVAL THEIR BATTLE WAS CAUSING TO THE INHUMANS REFUGE ABOVE THEM. EVENTUALLY, THE FIGHT WAS CALLED A DRAW BY UATU THE WATCHER, WHO RECOMMENDED THAT BOTH MEN GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS IN PEACE. WHICH IS, APPARENTLY, WHAT HAPPENED.

"THIS NOVEL APPROACH TO SETTLING KREE AND SKRULL DIFFERENCES MAY HAVE HELPED IN THE SHORT RUN, BUT AN EVENT WAS ABOUT TO OCCUR THAT WOULD CHANGE THE VARIABLES NOT JUST FOR THE SKRULLS, BUT FOR THE WHOLE UNIVERSE."



"THE RESULTING YEARS FOR THE SKRULLS, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, WERE CHAOS. WITH THE THROWN-OUT DESTROYED AND THE CENTRALIZED POWER OF THE EMPRESS RYLL GONE IN A VERITABLE INSTANT, A POWER VACUUM WAS CREATED THAT PLUNGED THE SKRULL EMPIRE INTO CIVIL WAR.



"ANOTHER AVENGERS ALTERCATION WITH SKRULLS OCCURRED DURING A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN THE KREE AND SHI'AR, THE ENCOUNTER WE CODED AS OPERATION: GALACTIC STORM IN OUR AVENGERS ARCHIVES. ONE WOULD THINK IT REFRESHING TO HAVE TO STEP INTO AN INTERGALACTIC WAR BETWEEN THE KREE AND SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE SKRULLS. BUT JUST BECAUSE WE DIDN'T SEE ANY SKRULLS DIDN'T MEAN THEY WEREN'T THERE.

"UNKNOWN TO SHI'AR EMPRESS LILANDRA, A SKRULL WAS POSING AS HER CHIEF COUNSEL, ARAKI, EGGING HER ON TO DESTROY THE KREE EMPIRE. THE REASONS SEEM UTTERLY UNIMPORTANT IN THE FACE OF WHAT EVENTUALLY HAPPENED: DUPED INTO SENDING THE NEGA-BOMB INTO THE KREE GALAXY, LILANDRA UNWITTINGLY ORDERED THE DESTRUCTION OF BILLIONS OF LIVES. THE AVENGERS FOUGHT TO THE LIMIT TO STOP THE DEVASTATION, BUT TO NO AVAIL.



"GOVERNORS OF THE MANY SKRULL COLONY PLANETS MADE A RUSH FOR POWER AND DECLARED THEMSELVES EMPEROR OR EMPRESS. IN A SYSTEM OF NEARLY A THOUSAND PLANETS, WITH COUNTLESS WARLORDS AMONG THEM, IT BEGAN TO RIP ANDROMEDA APART. THE AVENGERS PLAYED A PART IN ONE DRAMATIC EVENT, ACTUALLY ALLYING THEMSELVES WITH A SKRULL GENERAL NAMED ZEDRAO. HE CONVINCED CAPTAIN AMERICA TO WORK WITH HIM TO DEFEAT THE COMMON ENEMY OF NEBULA, AN INTERLOPING BANDIT ATTEMPTING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SKRULL DISARRAY AND TAKE OVER THE GALAXY WITH HER ARMY. CAP AGREED, KNOWING NEBULA WOULD TARGET EARTH EVENTUALLY.

"THEIR UNION PRODUCED RESULTS. NEBULA WAS THWARTED, BUT A NEW THREAT IN THE FORM OF THE SADISTIC MACHINATION OF THE CRAZED SKRULL MILITANT ZABYK—THE HYPERWAVE BOMB—EXPLODED DESPITE THE FF AND AVENGERS' BEST EFFORTS. THE HYPERWAVE BOMB SENT A PULSE SWEEPING THROUGH ALL OF SPACE, CAUSING SKRULLS EVERYWHERE TO BE STUCK IN THE FORM THEY WERE IN WHEN THE HYPERWAVE HIT THEM.

"WITH CIVIL WAR RAGING AND SKRULLS EVERYWHERE FINDING THEY HAD LOST THEIR SHAPE-CHANGING ABILITIES, SEVERAL DOMINANT FACTIONS EVENTUALLY ROSE, LED BY WARLORDS WHO WOULD CONTROL SPLINTER GROUPS OF SKRULL CULTURES, EACH DEDICATED TO THEIR OWN CRUSADES. THE ONE LED BY EMPRESS S'BYLL WOULD HAVE THE MOST INFLUENCE, HOWEVER, AS SHE UNITED WITH THE SILVER SURFER IN A BID TO BRING A FINAL PEACE TO THE SKRULL GALAXY AND AN END TO THEIR ENMITY WITH THE KREE. SHE MANAGED TO DO SO, AMAZINGLY, AND ALSO WAS ABLE TO RESTORE THE SKRULLS' SHAPE-SHIFTING POWERS AT THE SAME TIME."



"IN THE END, THE SKRULLS HAD FINALLY AND PROFOUNDLY PUNISHED THEIR LONGTIME ENEMIES."

"WITH THE SKRULL GALAXY STILL IN DISARRAY, BUT THEIR GREATEST ENEMIES **DECIMATED**, IT SEEMED LIKELY THAT THE SKRULLS MIGHT REFOCUS THEIR NEFARIOUS INTENTIONS BACK TOWARD EARTH. AND **THEY DID**.

"ALL ALONG, WE'D HAD **HINTS** OF POCKETS OF SKRULL INFILTRATION. BUT SKRULL NATURE BEING WHAT IT IS, THEY ARE **EXTREMELY GOOD** AT CONCEALING THEIR ACTIVITIES. IT TURNS OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS ONE GROUP CALLED THE **SKRULL KILL KREW** WHO HAD THE SKRULLS' NUMBER. AND WHILE IT IS HARD TO CONDONE THEIR **METHODS**, ONE HAS TO ADMIRE THEIR **EFFICIENCY**.

"LED BY A WILDMAN NAMED **RYDER**, THE FIVE-PIECE GANG TERRORIZED SKRULLS ACROSS THE WORLD. INFECTED BY THE MEAT OF SKRULL-COWS PROCESSED FOR SLAUGHTER, EACH MEMBER OF THE SKRULL KILL KREW HAD SHAPE-SHIFTING POWERS THE EQUAL OF ANY SKRULL, AN INTENSE LOATHING FOR THE SKRULLS AND THE ABILITY TO SEE SKRULLS IN THEIR NATURAL STATE DESPITE THEIR DISGUISE.

"THEY GOT INTO **SO MUCH** MURDEROUS MAYHEM TRACKING DOWN SKRULL IMPOSTORS THAT IT SEEMED AS IF THEY THEMSELVES HAD A **DEATH WISH**. AFTER THEY DEMOLISHED PLEASANT VALLEY, A SMALL TOWN INFESTED WITH OVER 3500 SKRULLS POSING AS QUASI-MAYBERRY RESIDENTS, THEY SEEM TO HAVE **DISAPPEARED** FROM THE SCENE.

"WILL THEY **RETURN** TO THE SCENE? I DON'T KNOW. BUT I CAN'T SAY THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO FIGHTING OFF THE CURRENT **SKRULL INFILTRATION** WOULD HURT..."





"OTHER SKRULL INFILTRATIONS OF NOTE INCLUDE LYJA, THE FEMALE SKRULL WHO ASSUMED THE IDENTITY OF ALICIA MASTERS FOR MONTHS BEFORE REVEALING HERSELF TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR. THIS LED TO A **TUMULTUOUS** RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FF AND THE MISGUIDED BUT BASICALLY DECENT SKRULL, ONE IN WHICH SHE WOUND UP SHARING A **ROMANCE** WITH JOHNNY STORM. AFTER THE BATTLE WITH ONSLAUGHT AND ITS AFTERMATH, WHEN JOHNNY AND THE REST OF THE FF WERE THOUGHT DEAD, LYJA FILTERED INTO THE HUMAN POPULATION AND HER TRAIL HAS SINCE BEEN LOST.



"ALSO, I CAN'T FORGET THE ERA OF **CAPMANIA**. IT WAS A TIME WHEN COUNTRY FELL IN LOVE WITH **CAPTAIN AMERICA** ALL OVER AGAIN, HIS POPULARITY RATINGS HIGHER THAN EVER BEFORE. UNFORTUNATELY FOR STEVE, THE FRENZY SWEEPING THE NATION WAS BEING **ESCALATED** BY A SKRULL POSING AS A HYDRA LEADER. AFTER SETTING HIM UP FOR THESE HIGH APPROVAL RATINGS, HE THEN **KIDNAPPED** STEVE AND POSED AS CAP, INCITING AMERICANS TO **RIOT** BASED ON THE FALSE THREAT OF A MASSIVE SKRULL INVASION.

"THIS WAS AN ISOLATED INCIDENT INVOLVING A **SINGLE, MANIACAL SKRULL** WITH A BIG EGO. BUT IT STRUCK AT THE HEART OF CAP'S IMAGE AND AMERICA'S IMAGE OF ITSELF. IF WE'RE CURRENTLY FACING A MORE **DEVELOPED CONSPIRACY** THAN A SINGULAR EPISODE LIKE THIS, THE DAMAGE WILL BE **EXPONENTIALLY WORSE** THAN A NIGHT OF STREET RIOTS..."

"THERE ARE MORE THAN A FEW SKRULLS CURRENTLY ACTIVE ON EARTH, NOT ALL OF WHOM ARE--AT LEAST ON THE SURFACE--UP TO NO GOOD.



"ONE OF THEM IS **SKRULL JOHN**, A MEMBER OF **MI-13**, A DEPARTMENT OF THE BRITISH SECURITY SERVICES LED BY MUTANT PETE WISDOM THAT IS DEDICATED TO INVESTIGATING SO-CALLED '**WEIRD EVENTS**' LIKE MARTIAN LANDINGS AND FAERIE ATTACKS. ACCORDING TO HIS MI-13 FILE, HE CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN PART OF A **SKRULL INVASION** FROM 1963 BENT ON TAKING CONTROL OF POP CULTURE. SINCE THEN, HE SOMEHOW CAME OVER TO 'OUR SIDE' AND BECAME A VALUABLE MEMBER OF WISDOM'S TEAM.

"NEXT ON THE LIST IS **JAZINDA**, CURRENTLY AN ASSOCIATE OF SHE-HULK. UNCOMFORTABLE WITH TOEING THE LINE ON REGISTRATION, **JENNIFER WALTERS** LEFT HER LEGAL CAREER BEHIND AND GOT INTO **BOUNTY HUNTER** DETAIL FOR A BONDING COMPANY. I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED TO SEE JEN DO THIS, BUT WITH HER **HEADSTRONG** WAYS I SHOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED ANY DIFFERENT.



"JAZINDA IS, FROM WHAT LITTLE WE KNOW, IN POSSESSION OF AN AMAZING **HEALING FACTOR**. ON HER FIRST JOB WITH SHE-HULK, THEY GOT IN A RUCKUS WITH CRUSHER CREEL, THE ABSORBING MAN. JAZINDA, POSING AS JENNIFER, HAD HER **NECK BROKEN** BY THE CREEP. NOT ONLY DID JAZINDA SURVIVE, BUT SHE GOT HER NECK SLOTTED BACK INTO PLACE. SKRULLS ARE AMAZING.

"AS LONG AS SHE-HULK **KEEPS AN EYE** ON JAZINDA AND MI-13 HAS **SKRULL JOHN** IN THEIR EMPLOY, I CAN FOCUS MY **ATTENTION** ELSEWHERE."





"NOW... **TEDDY ALTMAN.**
THE YOUNG AVENGER.
CODENAME: **HULKLING.**

"THIS IS WHERE CURRENT
EVENTS REALLY START TO
GET COOKING..."

"IT TOOK ALL OUR ENERGIES TO KEEP THESE KIDS UNDER WRAPS. WHEN THE AVENGERS HAD ORIGINALLY **DISBANDED** AFTER SCARLET WITCH'S MELTDOWN, THIS BAND OF **TEENAGERS** FORMED FROM OUT OF NOWHERE, FEELING AS IF THEY COULD **FILL THE GAP** WE HAD LEFT. WITHOUT TRAINING OR SUPERVISION, IT WAS ONLY A **MATTER OF TIME** BEFORE ONE OF THESE KIDS GOT SERIOUSLY HURT--OR HURT SOMEONE ELSE.

"CAP AND I WENT AROUND AND AROUND WITH THESE SO-CALLED **YOUNG AVENGERS**, BUT ONCE THE CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT, MOST OF THEM SIDED WITH HIM AND THAT'S THE LAST I'VE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH **HULKING**. I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS A GOOD KID, BUT SOMEWHAT SULLEN AND DOWNBEAT. I CHALKED IT UP TO THE USUAL **TEEN ANGST**--

"BUT HE'S GOT A BETTER REASON THAN THAT: THE KID'S A **SKRULL**.



"TEDDY WAS IN SHOCK, CONTINUALLY REFERRING TO THE BOY AS A '**HATCHLING**'. KL'RT PROVIDED TEDDY TESTIMONY TO HIS LINEAGE: AT THE DAWN OF THE **KREE-SKRULL WAR**, THE **SUPER-SKRULL** WAS ORDERED TO KIDNAP THE AVENGERS. IN DOING SO, HE HOPED TO GAIN THE HAND OF THE LOVELY **ANELLE**. EMPEROR DORREK, SENSING KL'RT'S ULTIMATE GOAL OF USURPING HIS THRONE, THREW THE **SUPER-SKRULL** IN PRISON.



"AND HOW DID HE **FIND OUT**? OUR OLD PAL THE **SUPER-SKRULL**, THE ONE AND ONLY ORIGINAL WITH THE NAME **KL'RT**, PAID A VISIT TO TEDDY'S HOME AND **EXPOSED** THE WOMAN HE THOUGHT WAS HIS BIRTH MOTHER TO BE THE NANNY FOR HIS REAL MOTHER, PRINCESS **ANELLE**. ORDERED BY THE EMPRESS **R'KILL** TO DEFEND ANELLE'S CHILD'S LIFE AT ALL COSTS, SHE FOUGHT BACK AGAINST THE **SUPER-SKRULL**--

"WHILE IN PRISON, HE OVERHEARD THAT **ANELLE** HAD GIVEN BIRTH TO A **MALE CHILD**. ONCE DORREK HEARD THE **IDENTITY** OF THE CHILD'S FATHER, HE CONDEMNED THE BABY TO DEATH. THE EMPRESS **R'KILL** ORDERED THE BABY TO BE **IMMEDIATELY SHIPPED** TO EARTH TO REUNITE HIM WITH HIS **FATHER**--

"THE **KREE-BORN MAR-VELL**.

"--AND WAS **FRIED** TO A CRISP FOR HER TROUBLE."

"**CAPTAIN MARVEL**, WHO DIED BEFORE THAT COULD HAPPEN."



"BACK TO THE PRESENT, AND YOU CAN IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. KL'RT SIGNALLED THE SKRULLS THAT HE HAD TEDDY--THE CHOSEN ONE MEANT TO RELINQUE THE SKRULL WORLDS--IN HIS POSSESSION.

"OF COURSE, THE KREE GOT WIND THAT THE SON OF MAR-VELL IS ON EARTH, AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED, TEDDY GOT AN EARFUL FROM THEM ABOUT HOW AS THE SON OF CAPTAIN MARVEL HE IS HEIR TO A GREAT KREE DESTINY. THE KREE CAPTAIN CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF SUPER-SKRULL'S STORY--

"TEDDY ALTMAN IS INDEED THE HALF-BREED SON OF PRINCESS ANELLE AND CAPTAIN MARVEL. HALF KREE. HALF SKRULL. POOR KID.

"IT'S AT THAT POINT THAT I SHOWED UP WITH THE REST OF THE AVENGERS TO REFEREE A ROOFTOP MELEE BETWEEN KREE AND SKRULL WARRIORS OVER THE POSSESSION OF A VERY YOUNG AND VERY CONFUSED BOY.

"IT CAME AS A GREAT SURPRISE THAT KL'RT, THE SUPER-SKRULL, WAS THE SAVING GRACE OF THE GREAT BATTLE. CONCERNED THAT HIS FUTURE EMPEROR WOULD BE KILLED IN THE CROSSFIRE OF AN OUT-OF-CONTROL FIREFIGHT BETWEEN DETERMINED ENEMIES, KL'RT AND TEDDY SWITCHED IDENTITIES. WHILE THE SUPER-SKRULL PRETENDED TO BE HULKING, HE AGREED TO SPLIT TIME WITH BOTH RACES, SPENDING HALF A YEAR WITH THE KREE BEFORE AGREEING TO BE TURNED OVER TO THE SKRULLS FOR THE OTHER HALF OF THE YEAR."

"A TENTATIVE PEACE WAS BROKERED AS THE KREE AND SKRULLS WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS. THE SUPER-SKRULL DISGUISED AS HULKING LEFT WITH THE KREE, WHILE THE REAL TEDDY STAYED ON EARTH WITH HIS FRIENDS.

"THE FATE OF THE SUPER-SKRULL KL'RT, HOWEVER, WOULD TAKE HIM FAR AFIELD FROM SAVIOR OF MERELY TEDDY ALTMAN. THE FORMER SAD SACK SKRULL MENACE WOULD BE THRUST INTO A ROLE AS SAVIOR OF HIS VERY OWN GALAXY, AS HE WAS CALLED TO STAND AGAINST THE ANNIHILATION WAVE..."





"ACCORDING TO RICHARD RIDER, A.K.A. NOVA, ANNIHILUS HAD DECLARED WAR ON THE GALAXY. THAT MANIACAL BEAST FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE HAD LAUNCHED THE ANNIHILATION WAVE, AN OVERPOWERING SWARM OF LOYAL SOLDIERS, ONTO SKRULL SPACE. ALREADY IN TURMOIL FROM YEARS OF CIVIL WAR, ANDROMEDA WAS PLUNGED DEEPER INTO TOTAL CHAOS AS MILLIONS OF SKRULLS BEGAN TO FALL."

"THE SUPER-SKRULL FOUND HIMSELF TO BE THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF LEADING A RAGTAG FORCE OF HEROES TO DESTROY ANNIHILUS' HARVESTER OF SORROW, THE WAVE'S PLANET-EATING SUPER-WEAPON. KL'RT WAS ABLE TO DESTROY THE MACHINE, AND THEN LATER TEAMED WITH HIS LONGTIME NEMESIS OF THE KREE, RONAN THE ACCUSER, TO REPOSSESS THE KREE HOMEWORLD HALA."



"IF THE ANNIHILATION WAVE COULD BRING TOGETHER SUCH HATED FOES AS THE SUPER-SKRULL AND RONAN, IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOME KIND OF THREAT."

"IN THE END, DESPITE KL'RT DESTROYING THE HARVESTER OF SORROW AND HELPING RECLAIM HALA, DOZENS OF SKRULL WORLDS WERE COMPLETELY ELIMINATED FROM THE MAP AND THE BOUNDARIES OF ANDROMEDA AND THE KREE GALAXY ARE ON FIRE WITH DISORDER AND VIOLENCE."

"BY CONTRAST, DESPITE ALL THE TROUBLES WE FACE ON OUR PLANET, EARTH IS A VERITABLE OASIS OF CALM. AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES US SUCH A FRUITFUL TARGET..."



"AND HERE WE ARE."

"EARTH IS A **TARGET**."

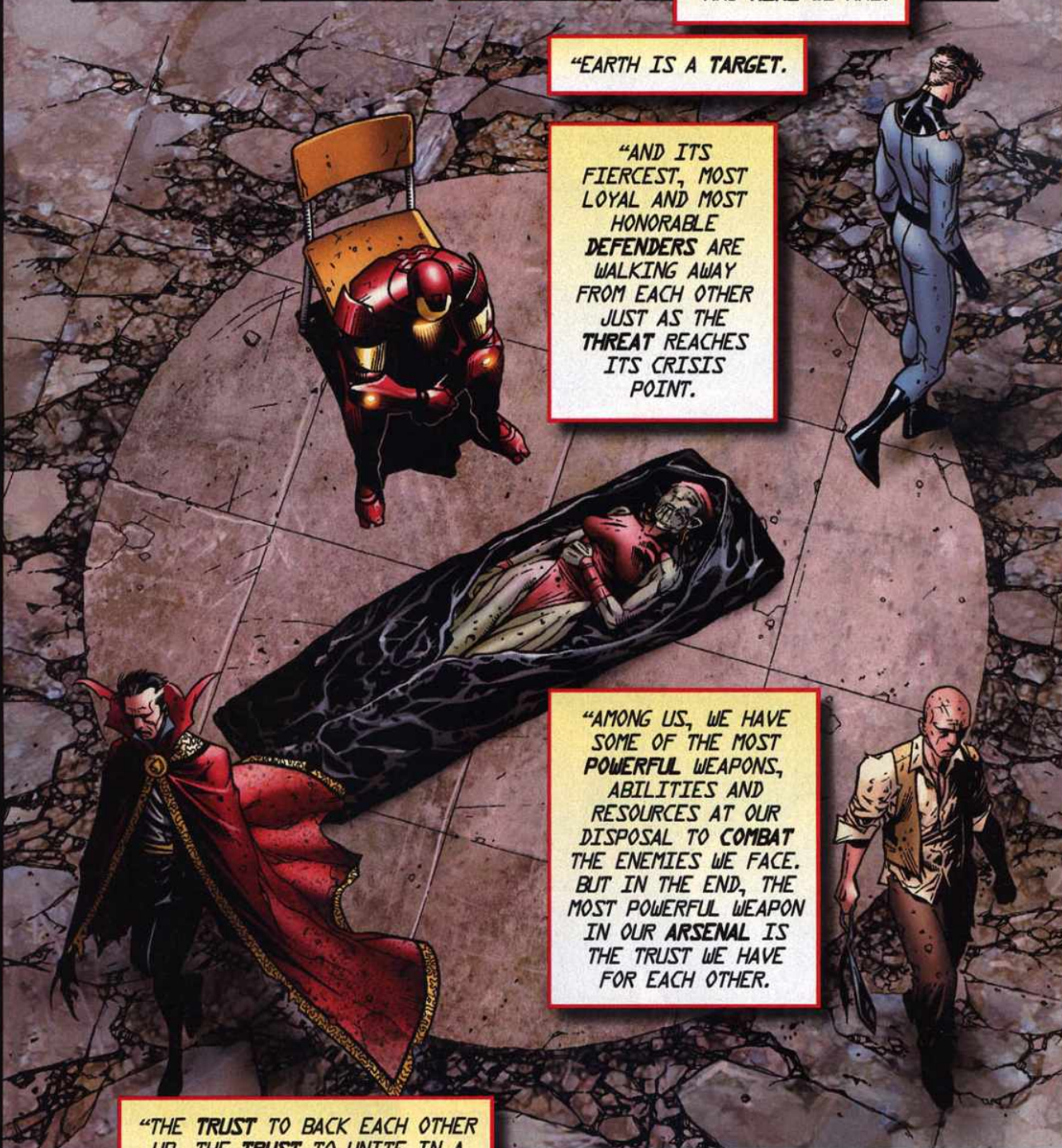
"AND ITS
FIERCEST, MOST
LOYAL AND MOST
HONORABLE
DEFENDERS ARE
WALKING AWAY
FROM EACH OTHER
JUST AS THE
THREAT REACHES
ITS CRISIS
POINT."

"AMONG US, WE HAVE
SOME OF THE MOST
POWERFUL WEAPONS,
ABILITIES AND
RESOURCES AT OUR
DISPOSAL TO COMBAT
THE ENEMIES WE FACE.
BUT IN THE END, THE
MOST POWERFUL WEAPON
IN OUR ARSENAL IS
THE TRUST WE HAVE
FOR EACH OTHER."

"THE TRUST TO BACK EACH OTHER
UP. THE TRUST TO UNITE IN A
COMMON CAUSE. THE TRUST TO
RISK LIFE, LIMB AND SANITY
TO SAVE THE DAY AND THE TRUST
TO DEPEND ON HELP TO ARRIVE
WHEN YOU MOST NEED IT."

"BUT NOW...WHO
DO YOU TRUST?
Nobody."

"AND THAT'S HOW THE
SKRULLS WILL BEAT US."



SECRET INVASION

An 8-issue Marvel event by Brian Michael Bendis and Leinil Yu

The shape-shifting alien race known as the Skrulls have infiltrated every super-powered organization on Earth. They could be your most trusted allies. Your closest friends. Your family.

Who Do You Trust?

The Invasion Begins in:

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- ☐ MIGHTY AVENGERS #12
- ☐ NEW AVENGERS #40

May

- ☐ SECRET INVASION #2
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- ☐ INCREDIBLE HERCULES #117
- ☐ MIGHTY AVENGERS #13
- ☐ NEW AVENGERS #41
- ☐ SECRET INVASION: FANTASTIC FOUR #1

June

- ☐ SECRET INVASION #3
- ☐ AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #14
- ☐ CAPTAIN BRITAIN & MI:13 #2
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- ☐ MS. MARVEL #28

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- ☐ SECRET INVASION: RUNAWAYS #1
- ☐ SECRET INVASION:
WHO DO YOU TRUST? ONE-SHOT

July

- ☐ SECRET INVASION #4
- ☐ AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #15
- ☐ BLACK PANTHER #39
- ☐ CAPTAIN BRITAIN & MI:13 #3
- ☐ INCREDIBLE HERCULES #119
- ☐ MIGHTY AVENGERS #15
- ☐ MS. MARVEL #29
- ☐ NEW AVENGERS #43
- ☐ NEW WARRIORS #14
- ☐ SECRET INVASION: FANTASTIC FOUR #3
- ☐ SECRET INVASION: RUNAWAYS #2
- ☐ SHE-HULK #31
- ☐ THUNDERBOLTS #122
- ☐ X-FACTOR #33

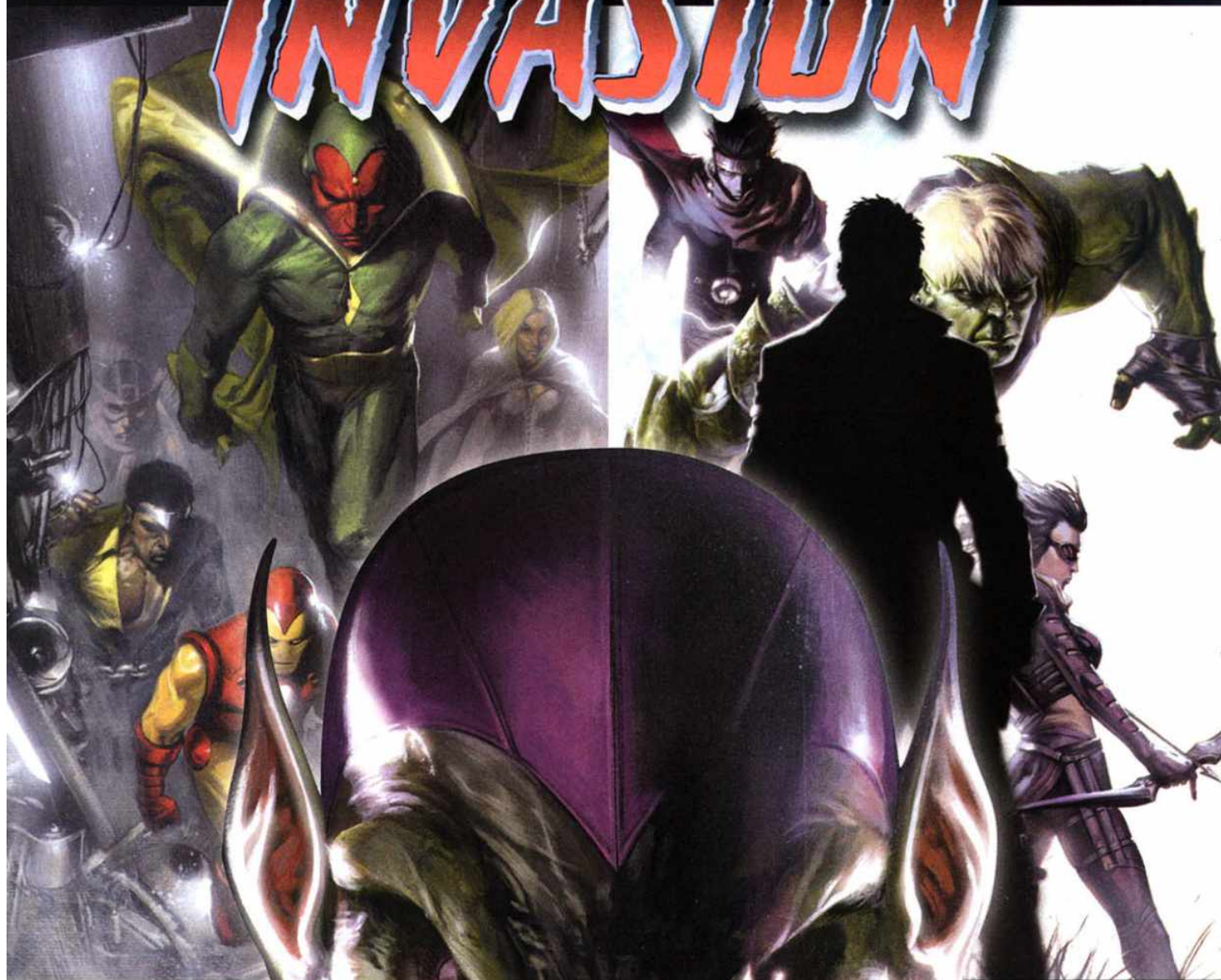
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SECRET INVASION



AN 8-ISSUE
MARVEL EVENT
BY BRIAN
MICHAEL
BENDIS AND
LEINIL YU

THE INVASION BEGINS IN APRIL